

## Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands

### Utah's New Cooperative Wildfire System

(formerly referred to as "fire policy")

**Previous System** (which was similar to other Western states):

- Almost entirely focused on fire suppression.
- Few, if any, resources were dedicated to the "ounce of prevention."
- Funded through an "insurance program," though some counties chose not to participate and municipalities were not even part of the system, leaving them unprotected financially.
- The *guaranteed future* for Utah (and other states) with such a reactive, suppression-focused system:
  - Ever-larger, more expensive, and more extreme, dangerous and deadly fires.
- A new system had to be created to avoid this certain future.

### **Development of the New System**

- Philosophical, agency-wide shift to emphasize *proactive wildfire risk reduction*.
- Long-term, progressive, systematic approach to reducing the risk of wildfire and, therefore, the ever-increasing costs of fire.
- Cooperatively built through a three-year, consensus-building planning process with:
  - Utah League of Cities & Towns and Utah Association of Counties
  - Utah Fire Chiefs Association and numerous firefighters
  - Legislators, and staff from FFSL, GOMB and LFA

### **Utah's New Cooperative Wildfire System**

- Went into effect January 1, 2017, following Senator Evan Vickers' SB 122 in 2016.
- The State assumes responsibility for suppression costs of large and extended attack wildland fires in exchange for local government:
  - Providing *effective wildfire initial attack* by local fire departments; and,
  - Implementing measurable *prevention, preparedness and mitigation actions* to reduce fire risk locally.
- Eligible Entities include counties, cities and certain special service fire districts.
  - This is an opt-in system but all 29 counties and most cities have joined!
- Participating Entities opt-in and commit to a "*Participation Commitment*" of measurable wildfire risk reduction work in their jurisdiction each year.
  - Participation Commitment is calculated annually using:
    - *Historic fire cost average* within that jurisdiction; and,
    - *A risk assessment by acreage* using the Division's innovative Utah Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (UWRAP).
  - These two components incentivize the behaviors most critical for reducing wildfire risk and impacts:
    - *Effective initial attack* (keeping fires small and less costly) to reduce historic fire cost average; and,
    - *Well-planned mitigation actions* that reduce an entity's risk assessment.
- Participating Entities sign a five-year cooperative agreement with the Division.
  - With FFSL assistance, must maintain a *Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan (CWPP)* that:
    - Identifies local values at risk, priority areas, and actions to reduce risk.
  - Remarkably, nearly every acre of the state is covered by a current CWPP.
  - FFSL staff then works with each Participating Entity to help prioritize actions and *cooperatively implement* projects to truly reduce risk in their community.
- Cost-shared county fire warden--50/50 between county and Division—has been maintained.
  - Fire warden is essential for ensuring that local participating entities understand and are successful in the new system, and every county now has a fire warden.
- System fully complements the Governor's *Catastrophic Wildfire Reduction Strategy*.

